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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

3 August 1951

Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence

Subject: Possible Re-emergence of the Turkish Straits Issue

In view of Western plans to include Greece and Turkey in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the USSR may raise the issue of revision of the Montreux Convention as a means of applying diplomatic pressure on Turkey and NATO members. In recent months NATO has been a principal target of Soviet attack and the USSR may claim that Turkey's accession to this "aggressive alliance" would not only infringe on Soviet "security" interests but also violate the spirit of the Montreux Convention. It is doubtful that the USSR could hope to achieve any substantial revision of the Convention favoring Soviet interests, but it might hope, by threats and intimidation, to prevent Turkey from joining NATO or to dissuade NATO powers from accepting Turkish membership.

The Montreux Convention provides that every five years proposals for revision may be initiated by any of the signatories. Such proposals must be supported by at least one (and in most cases two) other signatory power. Unless revision proposals are circulated to all signatory powers (Bulgaria, France, Great Britain, Greece, Japan, Rumania, Turkey, the USSR, and Yugoslavia) by 9 August 1951, this procedure cannot be used again

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until 1956. The Convention further provides that if agreement on such proposals cannot be reached through diplomatic channels, the contracting parties agree to be represented at an international conference to consider revision of the Convention. Such a conference may take decisions only by unanimous vote, except on certain articles regulating war vessels of non-Black Sea powers, in which case a three-fourths majority, including three-fourths of the Black Sea powers, is sufficient. Thus, the USSR, with the support of Bulgaria and Rumania, can initiate proposals for the revision of the Montreux Convention and can probably force the convening of a conference to consider those proposals.

It is evident that the USSR could probably not muster the necessary votes to obtain any significant revision of the Convention and, furthermore, there is no reason to believe that Soviet attempts to establish Soviet power in the Straits through direct negotiation with Turkey would be any more successful now than they were in 1946. Therefore, it is probable that any current Soviet maneuver in connection with the Straits issue would be inspired by entirely different motives. Under present circumstances the Kremlin may feel that the convocation of an international conference to revise the Montreux Convention might serve as an effective means of applying diplomatic pressure to discourage Turkish membership in NATO.

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